

REMARKS

Claims 14-16, 18, and 26-28 were pending in the application. Claims 1-13, 17, and 19-25 were previously withdrawn from further consideration. Hence, claims 14-16, 18, and 26-28 remain pending in the application.

Independent claim 14 has been amended to recite that the armature-mounting structure is configured to **engage** the fixed portion of the armature such that the moveable portion of the armature is substantially and **automatically** centered within the passage in response to the fixed portion being engaged to the armature-mounting structure. Independent claim 26 has been similarly amended with respect to the armature-centering structure. Support for the amendments may be found throughout the application in general and at least in paragraph [0036] of the specification.

No new matter has been added as a result of the above amendments.

Rejection of the Claims

Claims 14, 16, 18, and 26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 6,853,753 (Imahori).

To the extent the rejection may be applied to the claims as amended, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicant gratefully acknowledges the indication of allowable subject matter in claims 15 and 27-28. These claims were objected to as being dependent upon a rejected based claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Arguments in Support of the Claims

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the detailed Office Action dated December 6, 2006. In the Office Action, the Examiner raised a new ground of rejection based on a belief that Imahori discloses the armature-centering structure of the claimed invention. Applicant respectfully disagrees for the following reasons.

The Examiner appears to rely on the magnet strap 26 of the bobbin 22 described in Imahori for disclosure of the claimed armature-centering function. Applicant respectfully submits, however, that the magnet strap 26 of Imahori merely serves, through its vertical plane side portions, as a convenient place to support and attach (by laser welding) the armature side wall portion 32b. The magnet strap 26 itself does not include any means for centering the armature.

The Examiner cites the text in col. 5, lines 61-63 of Imahori as support for centering of the movable armature portion 34. This passage, however, is silent as to how the alleged centering is accomplished and furthermore fails to disclose any structure for accomplishing such alleged centering. To the contrary, Applicant respectfully submits a skilled person would reasonably conclude from the above passage that the desired centering is actually performed by a manual centering procedure. Such a manual armature-centering procedure, while well known in the art, tends to be time-consuming, difficult, and unreliable.

Nevertheless, in an effort to expedite prosecution of this application, Applicant has amended independent claims 14 and 26 to recite that the armature-mounting structure and armature-centering structure, respectively, are configured to **engage** the fixed portion of the armature such that the moveable portion of the armature is substantially and **automatically** centered within the passage in response to the fixed portion being engaged to the armature-mounting structure and armature-centering structure, respectively. Nowhere does Imahori disclose or suggests the invention as now recited in independent claims 14 and 26.

Therefore, for at least the reasons stated above, withdrawal of the rejection against independent claims 14 and 26 is respectfully requested.

As for dependent claims 15-16, 18, and 27-28, although they may recite independently allowable subject matter, these claims depend from independent claims 14 and 26, respectively, and are thus allowable for at least the same reasons as independent claim 14 and 26.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, Applicant submits the pending claims are in condition for allowance and the Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this application to issuance.

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Respectfully submitted,

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